

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
TUESDAY, SEPT. 25, 1962, at 6:25 p.m.**

RFK: Hello, Governor. I just talked to them and they are on their way.

BARNETT: On the way now? From the Federal Building?

RFK: Yes. So I think it should take them just a few minutes. The same group and the same number as the last time.

BARNETT: You are sending about 3 men with them. All right then.

RFK: O.K.

BARNETT: Thank you, General.

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
TUESDAY, SEPT. 25, 1962 at 7:25 p.m.**

RFK: Hello.

BARNETT: All right.

RFK: Everything all right down there?

BARNETT: Why certainly. Nobody even made any overt acts whatsoever. Just as smooth -- they did a lot of cheering and booing.

RFK: Who were they cheering?

BARNETT: They were cheering our side and booing Meredith. Nobody tried to fight him.

RFK: And he didn't get registered.

BARNETT: No, I read the proclamation similar to the one I read the other day. I told Meredith and the others, the Marshals, that when I took the oath of office as Governor I swore that I would uphold the laws of the State of Mississippi and our own Constitution and the Constitution of the United States; that I was going to keep faith what I told the people I would do, and a few words to that effect. Nobody was discourteous and certainly none of our crowd was discourteous as far as I was able to learn.

RFK: He is going to show up at classes tomorrow.

BARNETT: At Ole Miss? How can you do that without registering?

RFK: If there is any problem -- I don't think they will raise any problem about it. He made his effort to register -- but he is going to show up for classes. I think they arranged it.

BARNETT: The Chancellor arranged classes for him?

RFK: I don't know who -- so he is going to show up and go to class then.

BARNETT: Tomorrow morning? And not make any effort to register?

RFK: I suppose if something else comes up but I think they will accept him. It is all understood.

BARNETT: I don't see how they can. They're going to give him special treatment? They can't do that, General.

RFK: He is going to go to classes. He is going to be there.

BARNETT: Well, I don't know what will happen now. I don't know what we will do. I didn't dream of a thing like that. I appreciate your telling me that. Is he going up to Oxford tonight?

RFK: No. I am trying to find out whether he went back to New Orleans or to Memphis. But he will come in tomorrow morning.

BARNETT: All right, General. I am glad we didn't have any violence, you know. That always looks bad. There was no bloodshed today -- tomorrow or any other day I can't guarantee it. I can't stay up at Ole Miss.

RFK: We will send someone to protect him.

BARNETT: I don't think --

RFK: You can't control bloodshed, why do you do it?

BARNETT: I said this. I don't anticipate any trouble but I say tomorrow I can't stay there all day and every day --

RFK: I don't think you have to do that. Just keep somebody up there to keep him safe.

BARNETT: I will try to. I will encourage them not to have any violence, I sure will. I'll do it every time I talk to them.

RFK: That will be fine. He will show up there --

BARNETT: If you knew the feeling of about 99 1/2 percent of the people in this thing you would have this boy withdraw and go somewhere else. I am sure though you don't appreciate, you don't understand the situation down here. Why don't you look into this? I would be glad to send a committee to talk to you about it.

RFK: How about while the committee is here, letting him get in that university? Let's try it for six months and see ~~what~~ how it goes.

BARNETT: We can't do that -- let him come in for six months. It's best for him not to go to Ole Miss. It's so much better for him.

RFK: But he likes Ole Miss.

BARNETT: I don't believe you know the background of all this. We know pretty well what's going on. I think he's being paid by some left-wing organization to do all this. He has two great big Cadillacs, no income, riding around here. Who is giving him all this money? You see General, the NAACP, I told you this morning, no doubt in my mind, it's a front organization for the Communists and they would do anything about bringing about hatred among the races. We never have trouble with our people but the NAACP, they want to stir up trouble down here. I wish you could talk to them about the South. Get them to let us alone down here. We will be so grateful. We don't want a lot of trouble.

RFK: I understand that Governor. He will be there sometime early tomorrow morning and you and I will keep in touch with each other.

BARNETT: You call me any time and I will appreciate it, ~~if you~~ If I hear anything you should know I will give you a ring. Thank you very much now.

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
TUESDAY, SEPT. 25, 1962 at 7:35 p.m.**

RFK: Governor, I was thinking about your statement -- about going to Oxford. If I can find out when he is going to be there --

BARNETT: I wish you would. I can't sit up there all day.

RFK: I think it will be around -- maybe 9:00 or 10:00 o'clock. How would that be?

BARNETT: At 10 o'clock? All right.

RFK: 10 o'clock would be better for you?

BARNETT: Yes, it would, certainly it would be better if he is coming at all. General, why don't you keep that boy away?

RFK: Governor, this isn't a question of the boy going to the University of Mississippi. It's the federal government. If you were here as Attorney General you would have to do the same thing. I never knew the name up until a week ago and have no interest. Hell, it's my job and my responsibility and I took an oath to uphold the laws of the United States and I have the responsibility to see the laws are upheld. I would not be here if I were not prepared to do that. Governor, I feel if you were here in my position that you would do the same damn thing. You have lots of judges on that court from southern states and they were all unanimous, they were not weak-kneed. This is not a bunch of notherners telling you this. They are all southerners. I am just making sure the laws of the United States are being maintained. I can't understand that you cannot understand this principle. You and I don't want to get into an argument about that.

BARNETT: We would argue all night about that. You can never convince me that the white and the Negro should go together.

RFK: That doesn't have anything to do with ~~xxx~~ you or me.

BARNETT: One of the questions here is moral turpitude.

RFK: Are you against him because he is a Negro?

BARNETT: Oh, no --

RFK: Would you let another Negro into the University of Mississippi?

BARNETT: It depends on a lot of things -- qualifications -- I would have to uphold the laws.

RFK: What you said a little earlier -- that you never could see the two races going to school together -- this has nothing to do with moral turpitude. You just don't want a Negro going to the University of Mississippi.

KKK:

BARNETT: If a white boy should be convicted of a crime he would never get to the University -- he would not be eligible.

RFK: You can't tell me this was stirred up because he was convicted of a crime -- it's because he is a Negro.

BARNETT: That's one of the reasons --

RFK: That's one of the reasons. We're talking man to man. That's the reason -- you don't want a Negro going to the University. The problem is it has nothing to do with my personal feelings -- this is the law. Wouldn't you be enforcing the law if you were here?

BARNETT: Not the laws you're trying to enforce. That's not the law. I think you owe it to the American people to tell the Supreme Court that the Brown vs. Topeka ~~xxxx~~ decision is not the law of the land.

RFK: What do we do about the judges of the Circuit Court -- are they crazy?

BARNETT: I didn't say they were crazy.

RFK: Are they wrong?

BARNETT: . . . Oliver Wendell Holmes, Justice Cardozo, White. . .

RFK: Are you going to decide what decision. . .

BARNETT: When they don't follow the Constitution -- it's so plain and unmistakable -- and I consider the law of the land instead.

RFK: Can every citizen do that?

BARNETT: If enough people in America would do that the - - - will put their head to the ground and find out how people do that.

RFK: This is a circuit court in your own area. Judges from Georgia, Alabama and Texas. But anyway, Governor, they will be down there at 10 o'clock.

BARNETT: 10 o'clock will be all right. I appreciate your telling me what time.

RFK: If they enter that airport they will arrive between 9:30 and a quarter of ten.

BARNETT: You are not anticipating any violence?

RFK: I am not ~~amk~~ anticipating any violence.

BARNETT: No sir, we don't want any violence on that campus.

RFK: So he will be there between 9:30 and a quarter of ten. All right?

BARNETT: With the same people?

RFK: Yes.

BARNETT: Thank you General. Come by to see us.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN TOM WATKINS AND
RFK, SEPTEMBER 27, 1962

He called and said that if they came down and drew their guns that Barnett would step aside and let them in the campus. I asked him if this had the approval of the Governor. He said he had been talking to the Governor for an extended period of time and did have his approval. I asked him if he would talk to him that afternoon as I wanted to make sure that (1) they would let Meredith in and (2) preserve law and order thereafter. I suggested that he talk to the Governor directly and that it would be well for me to hear from the Governor also. He said he would call the Governor and subsequently, he called and said that everything was set and the Governor would call me directly.

I said that only one man would pull is gun and he said that wasn't sufficient. He said this is a tremendous embarrassment for the Governor and it would hurt him politically and he could not step aside if only one man drew his gun. They should all draw their guns.

I said I would have one man draw his gun and perhaps have the other Marshals put their hands on their holsters. He said I had better discuss that aspect of the arrangement with Barnett.

I then asked him if he could stay in Washington until the operation had been finished. He said he had to go back to New Orleans but put me in touch with his law partner.

Subsequently, I talked to Barnett who insisted, because of the great potential embarrassment to him and Johnson, that all of the Marshals draw their guns.

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 27, 1962 at 2:50 p.m.**

RFK: Hello.

BARNETT: Hello General, how are you?

RFK: Fine, Governor, how are you?

BARNETT: I need a little sleep.

RFK: I just talked to Mr. Watkins and we were going to make this effort at 5 o'clock this afternoon your time.

BARNETT: They will be here about 5 o'clock our time?

RFK: Is that satisfactory?

BARNETT: Yes, sir. That's all right.

RFK: I will send the Marshals that I have available up there in Memphis and I expect there will be about 25 or 30 of them and they will come with Mr. Meredith and they will arrive wherever the gate is and I will have the head Marshal pull a gun and I will have the rest of them have their hands on their guns and their holsters. And then as I understand it he will go through and get in and you will make sure that law and order is preserved and that no harm will be done to Mr. McShane and Mr. Meredith.

BARNETT: Oh, yes.

RFK: And then I think you will see that's accomplished?

BARNETT: Yes - (inaudible). Hold just a minute, will you? Hello, General, I was under the impression that they were all going to pull their guns. This could be very embarrassing. We got a big crowd here and if one pulls his gun and we all turn it would be very embarrassing. Isn't it possible to have them all pull their guns?

RFK: I hate to have them all draw their guns as I think it could create harsh feelings. Isn't it sufficient if I have one man draw his gun and the others keep their hands on their holsters?

BARNETT: They must all draw their guns. Then they should point their guns at us and then we could step aside. This could be very embarrassing down here for us. It is necessary.

RFK: If they all pull their guns is that all

BARNETT: (Inaudible) -- I will have them put their sticks down before that happens. (Inaudible) There will be no shooting.

RFK: There will be no problem?

BARNETT: (Inaudible). Everyone pull your guns and point them and we will stand aside and you will go right through.

RFK: You will make sure not the Marshals but the State Police will preserve law and order?

BARNETT: There won't be any violence.

RFK: Then we can get the other people out as soon as possible.

BARNETT: One second. General, we expect them all to draw their guns. Lt. Governor Johnson is sitting here with me (inaudible). Will you talk to him?

JOHNSON: General --

RFK: How are you?

JOHNSON: It is absolutely necessary that they all draw their guns. There won't be any shooting.

RFK: Can you speak a little louder?

JOHNSON: We are telling them to lay their clubs aside and to leave their guns in their automobiles. But it is necessary to have all your people draw their guns, not just one. (Inaudible) and anyone who shoots at all to leave. We appreciate what they have done so far and go back home and that there would be no shooting under any circumstances.

RFK: The one problem -- when we come down there representing the Federal Government and draw guns it's going to disturb your people, understandably --

JOHNSON: As much as it would bother them if they just drew one gun and 350 highway patrolmen --

RFK: If they all draw their guns and they go into the university, thereafter, law and order will be preserved by your people?

JOHNSON: We are going to attempt to preserve it.

RFK: They won't leave, will they? What I want to be sure is that it won't be left up to our people.

JOHNSON: We can possibly leave many people up here today. We will do that.

RFK: As I understand from Mr. Watkins and from the Governor, law and order will be preserved by the local people. I don't anticipate a great problem but I don't want an angry crowd descending on Oxford this evening. You'll be sure?

JOHNSON: Yes.

RFK: I don't care how you do it just as long as you take that responsibility.

JOHNSON: (Inaudible) -- all be on this campus.

RFK: So I've got assurances from the Governor that no harm will come to Mr. Meredith and the Marshals.

JOHNSON: Not as far as we're concerned.

RFK: We will do anything to preserve law and order.

JOHNSON: We will do everything to preserve law and order at all times.

RFK: As long as I have the Governor's assurance and yours.

JOHNSON: To the best of our ability. I believe that we have sufficient men to take care of it.

RFK: Let me talk to the Governor again.

BARNETT: General?

RFK: Governor, that's all I wanted. That's the best thing in the long run.

BARNETT: (Inaudible) There wont' be any violence. We will control them if there are a few there. The other day there were several thousand at the state office building and we didn't have a bit of trouble.

RFK: Just as long as it is left at the local level. They will be there at 5 o'clock and draw their guns.

BARNETT: We are going to step aside if they do that.

RFK: If there is any problem you will call me?

BARNETT: I will General.

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
THURSDAY, SEPT. 27, 1962 at 3:50 p.m.**

BARNETT: General, I felt like I ought to call you back. What we talked about General, it is something that I think this thing ought to wait until you send him back here. Why can't you wait until Saturday morning? Here's the thing about it. We want the people to subside a little bit.

RFK: I think the problem for you, Governor, you will have that court case tomorrow and that's why your lawyers wanted it done today.

BARNETT: Can't you pass that case for awhile?

RFK: They won't do that. You can't do that now.

BARNETT: I think this case ought to be put off. I am honest with you.

RFK: I will call them back and we won't do it.

BARNETT: We better postpone this thing and some of the others will be in touch with you about this thing. Let's not have any misunderstanding. We can't afford to have that. At 5 o'clock it's getting pretty dark down here.

RFK: I think you are making a mistake on it. I think the problem on Saturday is going to be much much more difficult. I think it is going to be much more difficult and your situation before the courts will be more difficult. I think it is a great advantage to do it today as your lawyers --

BARNETT: The people probably will find it out.

RFK: There's not going to be any mention of it from here.

BARNETT: Certainly not here. Our conversations weren't taken down here.

RFK: You never had anything that's come out of this office and I never said I talked to you and I have never made one statement about you or anything to do with Mississippi so I think --

BARNETT: One man said, 'you will all compromise in this thing?'

RFK: You are not compromising -- you are standing right up there. Your lawyers advised you on this -- your lawyer and everybody else in order to remedy the situation for yourself and get through this case in the best possible fashion. Tomorrow by the time the case starts the situation changes completely. We're not going to make any statement on this. I am happy it gets resolved.

BARNETT: - - - one man said to me, 'you compromising this thing?

RFK: Governor, we're coming in at 5 o'clock and sending 25 marshals bringing their guns and third, I am asking you ~~wether~~ whether you will take the responsibility for law and order. You said you would.

BARNETT: That's right. General, the Lt. Governor wants to speak to you.

RFK: Governor, as far as you're concerned, there is not going to be any statement out of here and for your own sake and the sake of your state, get it resolved today. I am happy to have all the Marshals pull their guns and force their way in. It's better that way than troopers running around.

BARNETT: Of course, you and I are in agreement. They are going to point their guns --

RFK: I'm asking from you law and order be preserved in Mississippi and you have no choice then

BARNETT: The Lt. Governor wants to say something.

JOHNSON: General Kennedy, we are trying to be completely honest about this thing. We got a few intense citizens here got a lot of men who are not directly under us who are involved to hold the fort such as sheriffs and deputies. We cannot assure anybody that those people or someone maybe hotheaded and start shooting and didn't want to assure you of anything unless we knew it could be carried out.

RFK: If you are going to tell me now in contradiction what you told me a half-hour ago that there won't be any shooting, I won't send in any Marshals there that they might be shot --

JOHNSON: That's what we are asking you for -- time. We've got to have time in order to discreetly move these sheriffs out of here --

RFK: Lt. Governor, let me explain something to you. It's a quarter of two here and your difficulty is that tomorrow you have got this court case and by then it's too late. If you and the Governor don't go to court they will issue a bench warrant and then they will have troopers arrest you and come in and also keep the university open and that situation will be worse. You've got a couple of hours to tell the sheriffs and others to go home and suddenly I will call at 4 o'clock your time and tell them he is coming in.

JOHNSON: I can't move those people out of ^{there} ~~their~~, General. Some won't leave.

RFK: Lt. Governor, it's completely up to you. If you say there might be shooting I will call it off.

JOHNSON: I am not telling you there will be any at all as far as we can control.

RFK: I can't take the chance.

JOHNSON: And we couldn't here. That's the reason why we called you. There are 300, 400 or 500 people and we can't shake these people in this length of time and get rid of people whom we don't have complete control over.

RFK: That's up to you. We will face it in court tomorrow.

JOHNSON: That's what I wanted to get over to you. We don't want anything to happen. We don't shoot Americans. We've got some hotheaded people in this state who are in this group and we've got to have sufficient time to move them.

RFK: You can't get this done today?

JOHNSON: No, certainly not.

RFK: May I speak to the Governor again?

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BARNETT: General? Let me say this. One man had a gun and I said, 'how many times does it shoot?' and he said 6 times and if that doesn't get the job done I got a little one here for number 7. That's what we want to control. I am the last man in the world to want any trouble. We can't have it, you know. If half a dozen people got killed it would hurt me, you the Lt. Governor, all of us. Why can't you do this --

RFK: I can't do that, Governor. I don't have any control over it --

BARNETT: I am talking about this afternoon. Pass it over for a few days. Let us know that these folk folks are cool headed and no trouble. I will go all the way out. It might be General that they might make a statement to the press that you are going to have to use force and we could tell our men just walk back and do nothing. You need to think this thing out, General.

RFK: I was relying on what Mr. Watkins said and what others said but I think neither one of us want to do it unless there is assurance there won't be any violence.

BARNETT: The Lt. Governor is thoroughly convinced we might be acting foolish here to do it this afternoon.

RFK: O.K., Governor. He won't come.

BARNETT: You have not broken your word to me. I told a lot of people -- you have been kind. I have legislature in session right now and it's rough on me. I'm driving 170 miles -- it's rough. You think it best this Meredith matter - - -

RFK: I don't know. You're going to court tomorrow.

BARNETT: That's contempt against me. General, I am not committing wrongdoing here. I wish you'd tell them to pass for 30 days.

RFK: I can't do that now, Governor. They said I should have used force against you. They're made at me and mad at you. I have seen in the papers that they think we should have answered the force you used. They are not very pleased with either one of us and are not going to compromise in my judgment. We going to have a great problem tomorrow evening by this time and that's why I wanted to resolve it today.

BARNETT: Just a minute, General. You think this case is going out the window if this matter not settled?

RFK: I talked to your lawyer about that. Went into it in some detail. I have no control over the court but I think it would be a major step forward if we could get Mr. Meredith in the university before they hear that case tomorrow morning.

BARNETT: General, if they get me in jail I will have to sit up there. I hate to do that but I can do it.

RFK: Sit up where?

BARNETT: Sit in jail. I'm trying to uphold the laws --

RFK: If you can get this fellow in the university this evening a lot of our problems would be resolved. Why does anyone have to know this fellow is coming there until I should call you --

BARNETT: We have had several hundred men --

RFK: Can't he come in a gate and I call and say this conversation has not taken place and he is coming through such and such a gate?

BARNETT: Yes --

RFK: Again there is a question of law enforcement but I would have to rely on you that law enforcement would be preserved. I can't do that with 25 men. I would have to rely on you.

BARNETT: General, this thing could be handled a lot better if we wait a few more days on the Meredith case. He is not suffering. Just a few days until the case is settled.

RFK: As your lawyer would tell you, they brought all these judges from all over the country. The whole circuit is coming to hear the case. That's the difficulty.

BARNETT: All 9 judges.

RFK: They are there tonight in New Orleans. I can't tell them to go home. I have no control over this. This is the court. They're made at me but they're madder at you.

BARNETT: Will they get an idea we compromised this thing? Will the judges think we settled this thing? They won't be thinking we compromised this case?

RFK: You mean -- if he gets in, that's what they are primarily interested in.

BARNETT: General, hold just a second here.

General. I am sorry to have to keep you so long but we will get busy here and do our dead-level best to keep people -- there are two or three I'm worried about and I'll see them personally.

RFK: I will have our people call -- (pause). Governor, how long would it take before you check with those people?

BARNETT: About, I would say 40 minutes.

RFK: Call me then. I will hold these people from leaving. That will push it up to about 5:30.

BARNETT: That will be all right. I will talk call you right back in 30 or 40 minutes.

RFK: All right, Governor.

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
THURSDAY, SEPT. 27, 1962 at 4:20 p.m.**

BARNETT: General, we will be here at 5 o'clock and I hope they get here by that time. We are going to put forth every effort and I don't think there will be any violence whatever.

RFK: Do you think we should take the chance? I don't think we should take the chance if there is any question about it.

BARNETT: I don't think there is any question about it. There were a couple of fellows I was worried about. We know them so well we will get them straightened out.

RFK: Can you move the people from the place they are coming in?

BARNETT: I think it would be bad psychologically to do that. I think you ought to come on as arranged. I think it would be much better.

RFK: Can you announce beforehand to everybody that they are coming and would absolutely want no violence? Is it going to be a surprise to these people when we pull our guns?

BARNETT: No, I will tell them under any circumstances will we have no violence. Not any of them will be armed --

RFK: Can I rely on you that there won't be any violence?

BARNETT: Yes, sir.

RFK: I am taking a helluva chance. I am relying on you.

BARNETT: There won't be any violence.

RFK: The Lt. Governor agrees on this too?

BARNETT: He agrees there won't be any violence. Of course, we can't guarantee everything.

RFK: I understand that. Your people --

BARNETT: Our people are going to be law abiding.

RFK: O.K. Governor. They will --

BARNETT: They will be there at 5 o'clock.

RFK: It will be a little later than that.

BARNETT: You understand we have had no agreement.

RFK: That's correct.

BARNETT: I am just telling you - - - - Everybody thinks we're compromising.

RFK: I am just telling you that we are arriving and we are arriving with force.

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
THURSDAY, SEPT. 27, 1962 at 6:35 p.m.**

BARNETT: General, I'm worried -- I'm nervous, I tell you. You don't realize what's going on. There are several thousand people in here in cars, trucks. Several hundred are lined up on the streets where they are supposed to land. We don't know these people.

RFK: I had better send them back.

BARNETT: There is liable to be a hundred people killed here. It would ruin all of us. Please believe me. Talk to the Lt. Governor, he'll tell you.

RFK: I just have to hear from you, Governor.

BARNETT: There are dozens and dozens of trucks loaded with people. We can't control people like that. A lot of people are going to get killed. It would be embarrassing to me.

RFK: I don't know if it would be embarrassing -- that would not be the feeling.

BARNETT: It would be bad all over the nation.

RFK: I'll send them back.

BARNETT: General, do that please. I just have to take the consequences tomorrow.

RFK: I will send them back.

BARNETT: You will let me know?

RFK: They won't arrive there.

BARNETT: I will announce that the man will not present himself this afternoon, can I do that?

RFK: What else would you say?

BARNETT: Maybe I had better not tell them anything.

RFK: We will put an announcement out from here.

BARNETT: You think that would be better?

RFK: Don't make a statement now.

BARNETT: Maybe I had better not make a statement at all.
Just announce it but don't give a reason for it.

RFK: O.K. Governor. Thank you.

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**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
THURSDAY, SEPT. 27, 1962 at 5:35 p.m.**

RFK: Governor, how he is on his way and should be there about 5:30.

BARNETT: About 5:30.

RFK: He left around -- your time -- 2:30, and I think it takes almost three hours.

BARNETT: Flying from Washington?

RFK: No, he is in Memphis but he is on the other side of Memphis. They are driving down.

BARNETT: About 5:30. I have about 22 minutes to four now. All right.

RFK: The thing is we just received a report from the FBI regarding instructions to state police down there and that they have been told these Marshals are coming and told that you want to preserve law and order and there is not to be any disorder, and that once this fellow gets into the University it is the responsibility of the Marshals to preserve law and order. I didn't want a misunderstanding --

BARNETT: After he gets in you certainly don't expect us to guard him all the time.

RFK: I just want to make sure --

BARNETT: We will do our best, of course. The local law enforcement --

RFK: From our understanding and my agreement with you law and order would be preserved by the State of Mississippi.

BARNETT: You mean after he gets in -- well, as far as we can.

RFK: I understand. I don't want to do anything but wanted to be sure --

BARNETT: You mean local authorities?

RFK: Whatever is necessary, Governor. Whatever is necessary to preserve law and order.

BARNETT: But general, I declare I don't think I could agree to guarantee the man after he gets in. When he gets in he is one boy --

BFK I had better call it off, Governor.

BARNETT: You want me to call the National Guard or ~~sex~~ anything like that?

RFK: I want to make sure law and order is preserved. From conversations with you the other times you said law and order would be preserved.

BARNETT: As far as it can.

RFK: That's all I ask.

BARNETT: As far as we can with reasonable diligence.

RFK: Governor, all I want from you is the same assurance that you will do what is necessary to preserve law and order.

BARNETT: General, wait a minute here. The Lt. Governor has an idea here.

JOHNSON: General, our local officers are here on the campus and in the county and in the city. They are the ones who would be responsible here.

RFK: My agreement and understanding, Lt. Governor, is with the Governor and you. I don't know them and from the conversations with you, I have to look to you. I don't care what arrangements you make with the other people but I have to be sure order is preserved by the local officials or by whom I don't care. But I want to be sure with you.

JOHNSON: That is nothing we can afford to do. When I talked with you before I told you local law enforcement officials would be on hand to keep the peace if it goes out of hand. Then, of course, we would come in.

RFK: We had over a period of the last four or five days in conversations with the Governor, he always assured me law and order will be preserved. Can I have the same assurance?

JOHNSON: We do that everywhere in our state.

RFK: I don't say there's a problem. If you can give me your assurance I don't care how it's done.

JOHNSON: All right. We couldn't assure you that students will be friendly. You see what I mean.

RFK: I don't mind that but I want to be sure someone will preserve law and order.

JOHNSON: We can't leave our offices here on the campus for the protection of the boy. The local officers will take over. If it looks like a riot or something of course our - - - will be immediately on the spot.

RFK: Are the local authorities willing to ~~make~~ take that responsibility?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes.

RFK: That's all I want to make sure. I don't care who is doing it. All I want to do is to have assurances from you two gentlemen whose word I have confidence in and whose word I staked on --

JOHNSON: We ~~will~~ are going to do the ultimate.

RFK: Can I talk to the Governor again?

BARNETT: General? You all understand one another?

RFK: Governor, I want to get it from you -- and I have confidence in your word, Governor.

BARNETT: We always say we don't have any violence in this city. It's a seldom thing. We will do whatever a reasonable and prudent officer would do. The Lt. Governor -- we can't guarantee they won't have some trouble. I don't know if we will or not.

RFK: I am not asking that. I just want to make sure that you are going to do what is necessary to preserve law and order.

BARNETT: We do that all over the state.

RFK: That's all I want from you.

BARNETT: We'll give the same protection as anyone else.

RFK: This is a difficult situation and you understand you have to watch it more carefully. But you have given me now your word as an individual and as Governor of the State of Mississippi as far as humanly possible -- not superhuman -- that law and order will be preserved.

BARNETT: Yes, sir. This thing here -- I don't propose to do anything out of the ordinary.

RFK: If it looks like you are going to have some difficulty there you are going to have to take some steps.

BARNETT: We always do that.

RFK: Governor, I don't know whether you are trying to tell me something without saying it. I am relying a good deal on your word and I don't want to be misled.

BARNETT: General, we will do what every reasonable and prudent official would do. Try to keep peace and order all over the State of Mississippi.

RFK: But you have a particularly difficult situation in this area and so it's got to be watched particularly carefully.

BARNETT: I don't think so -- not day after day.

RFK: I am not asking that -- I have been through this and I don't think I will get any further.

BARNETT: General, I won't treat him like everyone else, you know.

RFK: He gets on campus and indications are there will be trouble --

BARNETT: The local officials here will handle it.

RFK: If it looks like they can't handle it, they will watch and your state officials will --

BARNETT: I certainly will do everything that I think is proper under the particular circumstances to protect the lives and health and persons of everyone. We always do that.

RFK: If it's getting out of hand you would not have any ~~reluctance~~ reluctance to use state officials if it appears --

BARNETT: Well, that's been our policy all the time.

RFK: Thanks a lot, Governor.

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
FRIDAY, SEPT. 28, 1962 at 1:35 p.m.**

BARNETT: General, how are you?

RFK: Fine, Governor, how are you?

BARNETT: A little tired and sleepy. General, you have been very nice to let us know the dates in coming, you know, and the time, and we want you to know that we appreciate that very much, and the Lt. Governor appreciates it and the others. Now, we hate to just keep our force just day and night not knowing what might happen. I wonder if we could keep that good relation going? In other words, should we know if you are going to send him back? Will you --

RFK: Governor, it was so unsuccessful with you yesterday. I just want to find out what's going to happen. It seems to me just notifying you stirs it up rather than help the situation.

BARNETT: Here's the thing about it. When I talked to you yesterday I didn't dream there was so many people there. Some of them are pretty rough and rugged, you know. Honestly, I looked that crowd over and saw them growling and carrying on and after I went back and told you that it just wouldn't do to go. The Lt. Governor reported the same conclusion that it would be a tragedy.

RFK: Could I make a suggestion to see if we could work something out? What if you make a statement coming out for law and order, that you put the situation in Oxford in the hands of the state police and whatever the Colonel's name is whom I understand is a fine officer -- give him the responsibility of law and order and see, because of the near disorder yesterday, that no more than 3 or 5 people could get together. Send the sheriffs and assistant sheriffs back to their places and leave it in the hands of the Colonel to have the responsibility for law and order. I think if something like that was done and you made it clear to the students -- it doesn't have ~~to~~ a thing to do with Meredith -- you made it clear to the state and students not to get together in any one place and your state police will have the responsibility for law and order then you would have the situation in such control that at an appropriate time we could then work out when this fellow could come in.

BARNETT:

General, it wouldn't amount to a hill of beans. Those people down there would not pay a bit of attention. They wouldn't listen to that. I got up and told the student body, we all have a good name for peace and order in Mississippi. I said, let's be able to control our physical faculties and mental faculties and the people in the nation will admire you. It didn't amount to a row of beans. When they make up their minds about something they got to have a coding off period.

RFK:

What about making arrangements informally for the head of the state police and officers to talk to us about the problem down there. Would you want to send them up here?

BARNETT:

I will have a committee -- we might do that. I will get together with them tomorrow morning and see. General, you might not be familiar with this. Mississippi has a law that will pay this boy's school, his expenses -- I wouldn't want to be quoted on this -- but we have quite a number of colored people who are going to school in other colleges, preparing themselves for doctors and lawyers.

RFK:

Governor, he's going to the University of Mississippi.

BARNETT:

It looks to me General, like such a foolish thing for him to keep his mind ~~stik~~ on that.

RFK:

I think the courts have decided that.

BARNETT:

If he decided to go somewhere else, wouldn't they agree to it?

RFK:

They have already given their orders and it will be carried out. I would much rather have you have the responsibility for law and order. If you can't do it --

BARNETT:

I couldn't have kept order yesterday.

RFK:

If you applied yourself and gave proper authority to the local people like they have been able to do in other states, you could maintain law and order. If you can't maintain it in your state, obviously it would have to be taken by us.

BARNETT: General, do you know about this man's army record?

RFK: Yes. There's no purpose running through that again. Would you consider sending somebody up here and giving me a ring?

BARNETT: I will get a committee --

RFK: Professional people who know about law enforcement.

BARNETT: Oh, yes, I'll do that. I will talk to Birdsong and --

RFK: And then maybe talk to your lawyers.

BARNETT: Our lawyers, and will get in touch with you. I can't get together with them today since the lawyers are all in New Orleans now.

RFK: Where are you now?

BARNETT: I'm in Jackson -- at the Governor's Mansion. It's Fleetwood 34811.

RFK: O.K. Have a good rest now.

BARNETT: I haven't had much sleep here lately. I'm just resting for an hour or so.

RFK: O.K., Governor.

BARNETT: Can I tell these Marshals not to be worrying me every minute about bringing more on until you and I agree on something?

RFK: I don't know what the court is going to do. I think everybody ought to do what is proper. They might tell us to go in right away. I think everybody better do what they think is proper. ~~I haven't heard from down there~~

BARNETT: Not today.

RFK: I haven't heard from down there. Ok, Governor.

BARNETT: Thanks a lot General.

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN RFK AND GOVERNOR BARNETT,
FRIDAY, SEPT. 28, 1962 at 4:00 p.m.**

BARNETT: General, how are you?

RFK: How are you, Governor?

BARNETT: I am fine, fine. General, you cooperated wonderfully as I said to you before in letting us know the time and place in order that we may put forth every effort to preserve peace and order, to keep down riots, turmoil and strife. General, you are going to have to let us know something about when you are going to send the man up there. If you don't anything can happen.

RFK: Governor, I just talked to Mr. Watkins your attorney in New Orleans and I talked to him about the whole matter so why don't you talk to him and if you want to call me back and see if that's satisfactory, I will be here. If you want to talk to me again.

BARNETT: All right, all right. Just one second. I will call him and after I talk to him -- just a second -- General, let me give you my opinion. If you send troops, marshals, don't send Negro marshals. They won't do.

RFK: I won't do that. You will --

BARNETT: It just wouldn't do to send Negroes.

RFK: I don't think there are Negro marshals in the ones we send. In any case, why don't you call --

BARNETT: Tom Watkins --

RFK: And if you have a problem --

BARNETT: Is he in the courtroom? or do you know?

RFK: I am not sure -- he's not in the courtroom. I am sure he will get in touch with you. Until he talks to you then you can get in touch with me if there's a problem.

O BARNETT:

Until I have had a conversation with him. All right.
Thank you a lot.

RFK:

Call me if there is a problem.

September 30, 1962: Second Call:

Burke M.- Tom Watkins: Tom, we will have to send some of these people down by car; start them now.

Watkins - Get them in as quickly as you can; can you kind of spread them out; not in one big group.

Burke M.- They will go to a camp site at Holly Springs; they start immediately.

Mr. Marshall placed this call to Tom Watkins, about an hour after the first call - 1:45

**Telephone Conversation between Attorney General & Governor Barnett.
Governor Barnett called Sunday 12:45 p.m, September 30, 1962:**

Gov.- I am sorry I am late calling you. I had to go to the doctor this morning - an injured ear. General Watkins and I are here and no one else. Here is what we think should be done; you should postpone this matter.

AG - We can't do that.

Gov.- Then you had better have enough troops to be dead sure that peace and order will be preserved at the University. I am going to do everything in my power to preserve peace. We will have about 175 or 180 highway patrolmen in there - unarmed; no guns, no sticks of any kind. We will have quite a number of sheriffs unarmed - probably 75 or 100 deputy sheriffs. Then they will form this second line. The highway patrolmen will form the first line; the sheriffs the next. The sheriffs will have probably 200 or 300 soldiers behind them. No one will be armed. I will be in the front line and when Meredith presents himself, I'll do like I did before. I will read a proclamation denying him entrance. I will tell the people of Mississippi now that I want peace and we must have no violence, no bloodshed. When you draw the guns, I will then tell the people. In other words, we will step aside and you can walk in.

AG - I don't think that will be very pleasant, Governor. I think you are making a mistake handling it in that fashion. I suppose that if you feel it is helpful to you politically. It is not helping the people of Mississippi or the people of the United States. But I gather that is secondary in your judgment. I think it is silly going through this whole facade of your standing there; our people drawing guns; your stepping aside; to me it is dangerous and I think this has gone beyond the stage of politics, and you have a responsibility to the people of that State and to the people of the United States. This is a real disservice (said something about helping the Governor politically).

Gov.- I am not interested in politics personally. I have said so many times - we couldn't have integration and I have got to do something. I can't just walk back.

9/30/62

I
AG - You can say the National Guard has been called up and you don't want to have people from the State of Mississippi responsible for placing Mr. Meredith in the institution and therefore you are going to step aside on this.

Gov.- I'll say words to that effect. But I have to be confronted with your troops.

AG - What if we came down and the Marshals took over this operation this afternoon; if I called you a half hour before they are going to leave; There is no one down there now. I don't want any gunfighting; if they arrived and took it over before you got there. All I want to do is get assurances they won't be fired on. If 300 arrived on the campus of the University and took over that entrance.

Gov.- You mean have him registered today?

AG - No. Take over the entrance to the University and he can be flown in by helicopter tomorrow.

Gov.- You mean 300 armed men?

AG - Right; no one knows about it.

Gov.- You have more than 300.

AG - We have 400. They are not prepared to get in a pitched battle. They can go in there. You can say the 400 arrived by helicopter.

Gov.- They would stay at the entrance until tomorrow and not permit people to go in?

AG - That's correct, and I'd apprise you of it just when they were ready to leave, and it was too late for you to be there; or just ~~in~~ time for you personally to be there. A big crowd not wouldn't gather.

AG - I'll bring him in tomorrow or today. The situation would be stabilized then. You could announce we came in a different way or whatever you want to announce. The National Guard coming in there tomorrow to put Meredith in and before this overwhelming force you gave way, and you don't want the National Guard to put Meredith in the institution, and that you are calling on the people and everyone to behave themselves.

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Gov. - I think it is much better for everyone. And men will be armed. Do this thing tomorrow?

AG - Tomorrow, you will have big crowd there. If they come with guns, there will be an unpleasant situation.

Gov. - I don't think so; if the people from other states would stay away. We have coordinated this thing now; people are coming in here from Alabama and other states; they might have guns.

AG - The President is going on TV tonight. He is going through the statement had with you last night. He will have to say why he called up the National Guard; that you had an agreement to permit Meredith to go to Jackson to register, and your lawyer, Mr. Watkins, said this was satisfactory; and you would let him fly in by helicopter.

Gov. - That won't do at all.

AG - You broke your word to him.

Gov.- You don't mean the President is going to say that tonight?

AG - Of course he is; you broke your word; now you suggest we send in troops, fighting their way through a barricade. You gave your word. Mr. Watkins gave him his word. You didn't keep it.

Gov.- Where didn't I keep it; in what particular?

AG - When you said you would make an agreement and that Meredith would come into Jackson; send everybody to Oxford.

Gov.- Don't say that. Please don't mention it.

AG - The President has to say that. You said we would fly him into Jackson and register him while you had everyone at Oxford. Then you would say he has been registered and you would permit him to come to Oxford by helicopter on Tuesday and go to school.

AG - Mr. Watkins pledged his word to the President; we have it all down. You talk to Mr. Watkins and reach an agreement between the two of you, and how you are going to handle this.

9/30/62

I Gov. - Why don't you fly him in this afternoon; please let us treat what we say as confidential?

AG - You talk to Watkins and call me back this afternoon. I have discussed this with you before; I want to know specifically the plan you have and how it is going to work. I want to maintain law and order.

Gov. - I ~~didn't~~ didn't mean to break my word, certainly. Talk to Watkins.

AG - I don't want to talk to him again. He broke his word to the President of the United States. You talk to him and you call me. Ask him if he didn't break his word to the President of the United States.

Gov.- (speaking to Watkins) Did you break your word - on what? He said it was definitely understood and we will do it. If that was definitely understood between you and Mr. Watkins, we will go on and do it any way. Let's agree to it now and forget it. I don't want the President saying I broke my word. That wouldn't do at all. I didn't break my word. Here's Watkins now - we will cooperate with you. Watkins came on line.

O AG - No sense in our talking. You made an agreement with the President of the United States and I was on the phone, and the agreement, within an hour and a half, was broken by the Governor. I had an agreement with you on Thursday and it was broken. You are putting the President in an impossible situation. He is going on TV as announced and will tell how all of this came about. He has been put in an extremely untenable position.

Watkins - I am sorry you feel our word was broken. We also had an agreement that nothing would be said about it.

AG - Yes - if the agreement went through. We talked in confidence and the agreement was broken.

Watkins - If that was basis of a confidential talk - you people couldn't sit down to negotiate.

O AG - We are going ahead and do what we have to do tomorrow. The President is going on TV tonight and say what has happened. Everybody is ridiculous if they don't think he will.

9/30/62

Watkins - That will be a serious mistake.

AG - Now he says bring out the troops; have his army there so he will be a great political hero. We are sick and tired of playing that down.

Watkins - Why don't you fly him in this afternoon?

AG - You talk to the Governor and then call me back this afternoon. And agree on what should be done.

Watkins - I'll call you.

Gov. - It seems like Tom and I didn't quite understand one word. I'll let Tom and you talk now.

AG - I'll put him on with Burke Marshall.

Watkins - (speaking to Burke Marshall) The Governor realizes he can't avoid the physical force of the United States; treat this as confidential; he is willing and recognizes what you are doing to do; is willing for you to fly him into the University this afternoon.

Burke M.- We are not going to until the situation is physically stable; we won't expose him and then have him personally fight his way through state officials.

Watkins - You can put him on a helicopter.

Burke M. - Not until the physical situation is under control and law and order is maintained. We cannot again expose him to that kind of thing.

Watkins - He (Gov. Barnett) had the impression from the Attorney General a moment ago that consideration would be given to bringing him in by helicopter this afternoon.

Burke M.- If the situation is under control. Our Marshals would have to control the campus. The Governor would have to say the State has given up before the physical force of the Government and the State police will have to help to keep order.

Watkins - That will be done. We will send the Chief of Police straight to Oxford.

9/30/62

- Watkins - I would never have had my first conversation with you or either of the Kennedys if we had not talked in perfect confidence.
- Burke M.- Last night you were talking to the President of the United States about a national problem of great dimensions. He was willing to suffer criticism, I am sure, to do everything he could to permit the Governor to get out of a situation he got himself and the State of Mississippi into, without violence. That's why he reached the agreement with the Governor that he did. That's why it is absurd to think you can reach an agreement with the President of the United States and then call it off.
- Watkins - I realize that. It would be a horrible tragedy to keep us from communicating with each other again; If the President discloses any of these conversations tonight.
- Burke M.- I won't agree to anything the President will say -
- Watkins - I am stating it to you that it will make the situation in Mississippi more difficult in the future. We want to keep communications open.
- Burke M.- You and the Governor should realize that the President of the United States can't be played with in that sort of fashion.
- Watkins - I agree. Let me say this. The Governor and I are in accord that we will recognize the authority of the federal officers and to maintain peace and order. The highway patrolmen will give every assistance. The Governor will say that faced with overwhelming forces of the Federal Government, he is not going to submit his people to the possibility of bloodshed and he urges them not to take any steps that would tend to lead to violence of any kind or character. He will continue to fight in the courts. He does not agree to or would not approve any physical act of violence of any kind or character.
- Burke M.- Started to speak but was interrupted.

9/30/62

Watkins - Let me ask you this. I hope you will apologize to the President for what happened last night and ask him please not to say anything about these talks.

AG - If we get this cleared up this afternoon. It will make a major change. That's why it is important to get it done quickly. The President is going on TV at 7:30 our time. We are going to try to move it up for you. If the Governor could make the statement before the President goes on that would alleviate the situation.

Watkins - I agree. He goes on at 5:30 our time. Now how would you like the statement to be released through a press conference of some kind.

AG - Or just put a statement out; then the people can't get into a lot of questions about it. You can also, for his own sake, get into the National Guard and all that business. I don't care what he says.

Watkins - You wouldn't expect the Governor's statement to contain the statement about the entrance.

AG - No, but that law and order is going to be maintained by State of Mississippi; let's get busy on it.

Gov.- I am sorry about the misunderstanding last night. I am extremely hurt over it really. I didn't know I was violating any agreement. Please understand me.

AG - If we get it straightened out by 7:30 tonight, the whole matter will be alleviated. He either won't make his talk or won't mention this. Let's get going.

Gov. - Won't be notified --

AG - He will call me when Birdsong is at the campus; then we will put him in helicopter and start them on their way. You will be notified of that and you will put out your statement, and that will be before the President goes on TV tonight.

9/30/62

- Watkins - If it could be accomplished this afternoon; helicopter him in - without any attempted crowd; kept out at the gates; would be best for all to do it tomorrow; very few people on the campus on Sunday.
- Burke M.- If we do this this afternoon and the Attorney General gives the Governor a half hour notice, will the Governor instruct the State Police that they will come and the State Police are not to resist.
- Watkins - Yes - through Col. Birdsong of the Highway Patrol; he will instruct them. You would not want him to put out any other kind of public message?
- AG - We put these fellows in a helicopter and send them down there - in an hour or so, we will call the Governor and say they are coming, and he has informed Birdsong they are coming and his people are not to resist by any force; they arrived there and he makes public announcement in Mississippi along the lines you just described; that the Governor has taken over this and wouldn't want the people to resist; the action now is in the courts and everyone should maintain law and order.
- Watkins - (speaking to the Governor in background) The Attorney General just said they expect to give you 30 minutes notice when the helicopter would bring him in. He would expect you to notify the highway patrol to cooperate in every way maintaining law and order, and he would expect you to issue a statement this afternoon calling on the people to keep the peace. There would be no violence and you will continue to fight your fight through the courts.
- Kennedy - Is 30 minutes satisfactory?
- Watkins - We have to get Birdsong to Oxford - 160 miles; I think we can send him by plane; it is only 11:15 here; if you think you can time it to have him land on the campus by 4:00 pm here - 6:00 pm in D. C.
- AG - I don't want it to get dark again; if you move that time up earlier, to 3:00 pm.
- Watkins - We will send Col. Birdsong as soon as we have time to instruct him; will ask him to call us from Oxford; then we will call you and you can pass the word down.

Gov.- What we have said here before won't be?

AG - That's correct - if we get this thing done.

Gov.- If I am surprised, you won't mind or if I raise Cain about it?

AG - I don't mind that; just say law and order will be maintained.

AG - Let's get it straightened out. It takes 40 minutes for them to get down there; if I ~~can~~ can know as soon as possible when he will be there and have the situation under control.

Gov.- Please let's not have a fuss about what we talked about.

AG - I don't think that will be necessary.

Gov.- Tuesday at 11:00; I hope you will consider my position here.

AG - Let's talk about that after tonight; I'll talk to you then.

Gov.- You understand about our continuing the legal fight?

AG - I have no objection; I understand.

Statement by Governor Barnett of Mississippi
11:00 p.m., CST, September 30, 1962;

Some reports interpreting my statement tonight as altering my stand are positively untrue and wholly unfounded. My friends, I repeat to the people of Mississippi now, I will never ~~yield~~ yield a single inch in my determination to win the fight we are engaged in. I call upon every Mississippian to keep his faith and his courage. We will never surrender.

September 30, 1962: Third Call.

Tom Watkins called Burke Marshall.

Watkins - I wish you would do this. Before you dispatch him from Oxford - don't you think you should call R. B. Ellis, the registrar at Ole Miss., and tell him Meredith is on his way.

Burke M.- We are not going to put Meredith in until the situation is physically stabilized.

Watkins: I know that - assuming that it is --

Burke M.- Interrupted and said: We will call Ellis.

Watkins - We have sent Birdsong on to Oxford and he will call us back. I didn't know what happened last night until yesterday at 11:00 when the Governor called me. I hope it has not been irrevocable damage, between you, me and the Kennedys.

Burke M.- It all depends on how this thing goes this afternoon.

**ADDITIONAL CONVERSATION WITH GOVERNOR
ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1962**

Sometime between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., Washington time, Governor Barnett called and dictated the statement he intended to make, which was in fact the statement which he did make around 6:00 p.m. Jackson time on September 30.

Around 8:00 p.m. Washington time, the Attorney General called the Governor to inform him that Meredith had arrived on the campus. He told the Governor that Meredith had been met at the airport and had proceeded to the campus by automobile, not by helicopter as was stated in the Governor's announcement. The Governor told the Attorney General that he didn't have any mechanical method of changing his statement. He said either that he didn't have a pencil or that he didn't have a secretary.

JM